



STATE OF VERMONT
Department of Education
120 State Street
Montpelier, VT 05620-2501

VERMONT STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
Special Meeting via conference call
March 10, 2008

The State Board of Education shall sustain a vision of high skills, creative thinking, and love of knowledge and learning for every student by setting education policy that ensures student achievement in a safe and healthy learning environment.

Approved Minutes – March 10, 2008

Present in person or via conference call

Board Members: Tom James, Chair; Ruth Stokes, Vice-Chair; Chris Robbins; Brian Vachon; Susan Schill; Kathy Larsen

Department of Education: Richard Cate, Commissioner; Mark Oettinger, Carol King, Cindy Lee

Other: Terri Hallenbeck, Burlington Free Press; Sarah Hinkley, Times Argus

Call to Order

Tom James, Chair called the meeting to order at 4:24 p.m.

Roll Call and Introductions

Chair James, Board members introduced themselves, as did others in attendance.

Chair James stated the purpose of the meeting: so the Board can formally take a position on the Senate proposal to elevate the Department of Education to an Agency overseen by a Secretary appointed by the Governor and eliminate the State Board of Education.

He asked that if Board members planned on speaking at the Senate Education public hearing on March 12 to call and inform the Senate Education Committee clerk in advance, as directed by Senator Collins. Members stated that they were comfortable with Chair James representing the Board. Brian Vachon indicated he was available to attend part of the meeting.

James read through the proposal and then presented his draft statement for the Board's review and comments. The Board supported the motion statement and agreed on the following changes:

- Replace the word, “initiative” with “proposal.”
- Delete the third paragraph.
- Include the word “policy” to the second sentence in the fifth bullet.
- Add a sixth bullet stating, “We believe passage of this proposal could seriously jeopardize the momentum of the current transformation initiative.”
- Delete last paragraph but keep on hand if needed.
- Other editorial changes.

Adjourn

The Board adjourned at 5:35 p.m.

Minutes prepared by Cindy Lee

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Motion adopted by the State Board of Education on 3/10/08 regarding a proposal by the Senate Education Committee to change the Department of Education to an agency overseen by a secretary appointed by the Governor and to eliminate the State Board of Education.

The sitting State Board of Education is opposed to the proposal. Among the reasons for the Board’s opposition are the following:

- The proposal does not define the problem(s) expected to be solved by this change.
- The proposal does not identify any anticipated effects on student outcomes.
- The proposal does not identify how this will affect/improve the cost of education.
- We believe the education of students would more often be exposed to the influences of changes of leadership by this proposal, and this would be counterproductive to effective student education.
- The current structure under which an independent Board and Commissioner are free to consider broad policy and initiatives has served Vermont well. Education budget and policy decisions are currently made at the local level by duly elected School Boards who are accountable to their voters.
- We believe the passage of this proposal could seriously jeopardize the momentum of the current *Transformation of Education in Vermont* initiative.

At the same time, the Board understands the Senate Education Committee’s dissatisfaction with some aspects of the state’s educational system, with perceived lines of authority and accountability within that system, and with the level of

communication among those charged with overseeing its functions and the delivery of its services. The Board offers its support to improve communications and work toward common goals to achieve the best results for the students and taxpayers of Vermont. Specifically, we propose beginning a conversation with the Legislative Education Committees on the *Transformation of Education in Vermont* initiative which is in development, and the implementation of which we believe has the potential to positively address many of the concerns and issues identified by the Committee. We believe this conversation would be valuable for all concerned.